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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

6 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Under Secretary of State for
Political Affairs

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Request for One-Time Variation in IDEALIST
U-2R Flight Track Limitations off the North
Vietnamese Coast

1. On 7 May 1973 the 40 Committee authorized flying two test photo reconnaissance missions off the coast of North Vietnam with the IDEALIST U-2R aircraft employing the "H" camera. (Two previous test missions had been flown on 30 March 1973 and 31 March 1973, but the results of these initial tests were inconclusive.) IDEALIST Mission S-033E was flown on 21 July 1973. An evaluation of this mission's results indicates that it has provided the best peripheral coverage to date of the North Vietnamese coastal areas. The flight track on this mission ran from the DMZ to 2030N. The weather was uniformly favorable and coverage was obtained on targets of intelligence interest from northern Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam to the Do Son Peninsula in North Vietnam.

2. The Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam states in part that "the United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity

NSC Review Completed

NRO review(s) completed.

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SCHEME OF E.O. 11652, CATEGORY:
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of Vietnam as required by the 1954 Geneva Agreement on Vietnam." This provision, in effect, restricts the IDEALIST U-2R mission to observing the 12 nautical mile territorial boundary of the North Vietnamese mainland and offshore islands. This constraint, particularly when applied to the offshore islands, if modified, could significantly improve the quality of photography in certain areas along the North Vietnamese coast line. Two new route options (Northern and Southern) have been designated that could greatly improve the photography in these areas with respect to scale and photo interpretability; however, each of these routes approach within 12 nautical miles of one North Vietnamese offshore island or island group.

3. In order to fully exploit the operational capability and to ascertain the kind of coverage that can be anticipated from this camera system, one-time permission (for this mission only) is hereby requested for modifying the flight path restrictions as follows:

Northern Route - To remain 12 or more nautical miles away from the North Vietnamese coast and all offshore islands with the exception of an island group located at 2037N/1071E, which will be avoided by four nautical miles. This flight path, if approved, will approach no closer than 20 nautical miles to any known SAM site.

Southern Route - To remain 12 or more nautical miles away from the North Vietnamese coast and all offshore islands with the exception of Hon Co island, which will be avoided by a minimum of four nautical miles. This flight path, if approved, will approach no closer than 22 nautical miles to any known SAM site.

4. If this request is approved, either the Northern Route or the Southern Route will be selected to be flown as the second of the currently approved two test mission series. The decision on the Northern Route versus the Southern Route will be made based on weather and intelligence requirements at the time. If this request is not approved, then the second of the currently approved series will be flown observing the 12 nautical mile limitations from offshore islands.

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John L. McLucas

Attachment--Proposal Book

APPROVAL

40 Committee Principal

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ONE-TIME VARIATION IN IDEALIST
U-2R FLIGHT TRACK LIMITATIONS
OFF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COAST

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I. JUSTIFICATION

The capability of the "H" camera system to obtain high resolution photography of the North Vietnamese coastal area was successfully demonstrated as a result of IDEALIST U-2R Mission S-033E, 21 July 1973. While this mission produced the best peripheral reconnaissance coverage to date for satisfying national intelligence requirements, the scale and resolution of the photographic product can be improved.

Post mission analysis of both photography and mission flight track confirms that enhanced results are possible by reducing the offset distance from the target to not greater than 25 nautical miles. The proposed Northern flight path is planned to employ an offset distance of 25 nautical miles center aiming of Haiphong Harbor. The effect will be to improve scale by 19 percent and resolution by 16 percent. The Southern route is planned to employ an offset distance of 20 nautical miles center aiming in the vicinity of the DMZ. The effect will be to improve scale by 15 percent and resolution by 19 percent. Both of these improvements will permit more detailed and precise photo interpretation of the product.

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To fully exploit the "H" camera capability to achieve the scale and resolution envisioned above, a one-time waiver to the 12 nautical mile island restriction is requested. This waiver will allow the Northern flight path to approach no closer than 4 nautical miles to an island group located in the approaches to Haiphong Harbor and will allow the Southern flight path to approach no closer than 4 nautical miles to Hon Co island northeast of the DMZ.

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II. OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

An IDEALIST U-2R will fly a round-robin mission

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The aircraft will fly a low altitude departure route similar

to normal low flight training missions

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Two collection route options (Northern and Southern) have been flight planned and either may be utilized depending on weather. The Northern option provides coverage from 1900N to 2035N and the photographic flight line avoids the North Vietnamese mainland and offshore islands by 12 nautical miles with the exception of an island group located at 2037N/10710E. This island group will be avoided by at least 4 nautical miles. The Southern option provides coverage

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from the DMZ to 1938N and the photographic flight lines avoid the North Vietnamese mainland and offshore islands by 12 nautical miles with the exception of Hon Co island located at 1710N/10720E. Hon Co island will be avoided by at least 4 nautical miles. If the weather is good, the entire route from the DMZ to the Haiphong Harbor may be flown; however, only one island or island group will be approached closer than 12 nautical miles and this area will be determined by intelligence requirements.

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IV. CLIMATOLOGY

Coastal North Vietnam

A. GENERAL:

The southwest monsoon which began in late spring is expected to continue until the end of September. As a result of the continued wet season west of the Annam Mountains, haze would be expected to be at a minimum over South East Asia; however, the strong southwest wind flow for this period tends to bring cloud patterns over the mountains to the coast, thus, slightly reducing the number of clear to scattered days in August as compared to June and July.

B. CLOUDINESS:

Mean cloudiness is near 70 percent in August and September. As a general rule, cloudiness is greatest north of 19 degrees. Aircraft flying at high altitudes would be expected to encounter clear to scattered cloud conditions at individual targets on 2 to 3 days north of 19 degrees north and on 3 to 6 days south of 19 degrees north.

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